## IN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel claims 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21.

Amend claims 1-4 and 13 as set forth below:

- 1. (currently amended) A system for predicting the lapping property of a lapping plate, comprising:
  - a rotatable platform;
- a lapping plate mounted to the rotatable platform for rotation therewith and having an axial center;
- a holder having a specimen mounted thereto and <u>an axial center</u>, and the holder being positioned on the lapping plate, the holder also being undriven but free to rotate about the axial center of the holder relative to the lapping plate;
- a fixture positioned adjacent to the lapping plate, the fixture having a stationary base, an arm mounted to and extending away from the base toward the lapping plate, and a guide feature mounted to the arm for contacting and supporting the holder in a single radial and angular position with respect to the axial center of the lapping plate;

friction detection means mounted to the fixture for measuring frictional force between the lapping plate and the specimen; and

- a distance sensor mounted to the holder for detecting a gap distance between the distance sensor and the lapping plate.
- 2. (currently amended) The system of claim 1, [[wherein]] further comprising means for rotating the lapping plate [[rotates]] for a specific time so that adequate removal of material from the specimen occurs, and a lapping rate is determined from a change in the gap distance over a time interval, and the lapping rate and friction are then assessed to determine if the lapping plate is acceptable.
- 3. (currently amended) The system of claim 1, [[wherein the system determines]] <u>further comprising means for determining</u> a lapping rate of the lapping plate under a fixed load and a fixed rotation speed, such that a coefficient of friction and a Preston coefficient of the lapping plate can be calculated.

- 4. (currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the distance sensor is a non-invasive, unobstructed sensor for measuring a physically unobstructed gap distance between the distance sensor and the lapping plate.
- 5. (original) The system of claim 4, the distance sensor is an inductive distance sensor having a sensitivity of approximately 100 nm for a 10 mV sensor output.
- 6. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the guide feature comprises a set of guide wheels that keep the holder in place when the lapping plate is rotating.
- 7. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the specimen comprises a plurality of specimens that are symmetrically spaced apart about the distance sensor.
- 8. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the lapping plate is charged with abrasive.
- 9. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the specimen is formed from a material used to fabricate sliders.
- 10. (original) The system of claim 1, further comprising a weight added to a top of the holder so that the specimen and the lapping plate experience a pressure that is analogous to a slider lapping pressure.
- 11. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the friction detection means is mounted to the arm.
- 12. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the friction detection means is a strain gage.

- 13. (currently amended) An apparatus for predicting the lapping property of a lapping plate, comprising:
- a rotatable platform adapted to support a lapping plate thereon for rotation therewith, the lapping plate having an axial center;
- a holder having a <u>plurality of</u> specimen mounted thereto and <u>an axial center</u>, the holder <u>being</u> adapted to be positioned on top of the lapping plate <u>and the holder being undriven but free</u> to rotate about the axial center of the holder relative to the lapping plate;
- a fixture having a stationary base, an arm mounted to and extending away from the base[[, and]];
- a guide feature mounted to the arm for contacting and horizontally supporting the holder in a single radial and angular position with respect to the axial center of the lapping plate, the guide feature comprising a set of guide wheels that keep the holder in place when the lapping plate is rotating;

friction detection means mounted to the arm of the fixture and adapted to measure frictional force between the lapping plate and the specimen;

a <u>non-invasive</u> distance sensor mounted to the holder and adapted to detect a <u>physically unobstructed</u> vertical gap distance between the distance sensor and the lapping plate, wherein the <u>plurality of specimen are symmetrically spaced apart from each other about the distance sensor; [[and]]</u>

the rotatable platform being adapted to rotate the lapping plate for a specific time so that adequate removal of material from the specimen occurs[[, and]];

means for determining a lapping rate [[is determined]] from a change in the gap distance over a time interval, and the lapping rate and friction are then assessed to determine if the lapping plate is acceptable[[.]];

a weight added to a top of the holder so that the plurality of specimen and the lapping plate experience a pressure that is analogous to a slider lapping pressure; and

means for determining the lapping rate of the lapping plate under a fixed load of the weight and a fixed rotation speed, such that a coefficient of friction and a Preston coefficient of the lapping plate can be calculated.

## 14. (canceled)

- 15. (canceled)
- 16. (original) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the distance sensor is an inductive distance sensor having a sensitivity of approximately 100 nm for a 10 mV sensor output.
- 17. (canceled)
- 18. (canceled)
- 19. (original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the specimen is formed from a material used to fabricate sliders.
- 20. (canceled)
- 21. (canceled)
- 22. (original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the friction detection means is a strain gage.